

Role of Raitha Samparka Kendras for the Development of Agriculture Sector in Karnataka

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Abstract

Agriculture is a way of life and not mere an economic activity in the Indian sub continent. Agriculture and allied activity is also the major source of employment generation in India as well as Karnataka. Therefore, government has taken several programmes to develop agricultural sector. One of the important programmes of Agriculture department of Government of Karnataka is Raitha Samparka Kendras that provide information to the farmers related to agriculture and allied sector. The main objective of this study is to review the RSK intervention in the development of agricultural sector. The study is based on secondary data. The data is collected from the department of agriculture and cooperation in Karnataka and various published journals. This study tries to outline the working of Raitha Samparka Kendra (Farmer's Communication Centre) and come up with suggestions to strengthening its working. The study believes that, it is imperative to provide relevant information continuously to farmers at grassroots level by establishing centres at gram panchayat (village governance) level.

Keywords: RSK, Information Dissemination, Agriculture, Karnataka

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a way of life and not mere an economic activity in the Indian sub continent. Agriculture and allied activity is also the major source of employment generation in India as well as Karnataka. India, which is in the run for information development has introduced and is carrying forward nationwide digital programmes to modernize agriculture with a view to attain food security and also to bring in structural changes including socio-economic transformation among farming community. It can be said that, information diffusion play a pivotal role in enhancing agricultural productivity. Information administered in the right way can enable right knowledge to reach intermediaries and small farmers in a timely manner. Such timely dissemination of information undoubtedly reduces the risk and uncertainty. But, efficient agricultural information management depends on adequate mechanisms to generate, capture and disseminate the same effectively. This calls for institutional arrangements. A successful agricultural programme is one which amalgamates both scientific research and indigenous knowledge. The respective governments have taken several measures to develop agriculture through various new programmes.

Karnataka has a typical composition of having regions with most of the agro-climatic condition in the country. A large portion of the land falls under semi-arid conditions facing severe agro-climatic and resource constraints. Karnataka is always been looked upon and has taken lead in many aspects. Even with agriculture, it is the first State in the country to have unveiled its own Agricultural Policy as early as 1995. This is a part of State list that is enshrined in our constitution. Successive policies have laid emphasis on improving agricultural output in the state. It was the State agriculture programme (2000) that stressed upon productivity by creating an information pool/source for the farmers. This programme turned the attention from productivity centric to farmer centric and laid foundation for information penetration to the grassroots. It was realized that information provided to farmer at right time will directly help in increased productivity. In this direction a step towards information dissemination was taken forward by setting up *Raitha Samparka Kendra*.

Raitha samparka kendras was introduced by the government of Karnataka under ministry of Agriculture and Co-operation during 2000- 01 to provide effective Agrcultural extension services to farmers. This was envisaged to meet the growing demands of farming community to adopt the latest technologies. *Raitha Mitra Yojane* was implemented in the State since 2000-01. *Raitha Mitra Yojane*, a demand driven Agricultural Extension System which replaced the earlier extension system T&V which means Train & Visit system. The Agricultural Extension Centres opened under this new programme at *Hobli* level are called *Raita Samparka Kendras* (RSK). The main aim of the RSK is to provide up-to-date information on farm practices and market intelligence to the farmers. The 2006 Karnataka state policy has came up with more initiatives to strengthen the working of RSK's.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data as that is the only source of gathering information for a study of this nature. This is a secondary research that uses data collected through primary research. In this secondary research method, data was collected and analyzed from different sources of information consisting of government records, registers, technical reports and journals. A review of secondary data is always recommended for all studies. The government records are authentic sources of information as all the welfare programmes are controlled and funded by the government. The secondary data was collected from the department of agriculture and cooperation of government of Karnataka. This study tries to outline the working of *Raitha Samparka Kendra* and come up with suggestions to strengthening its working.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Raghu Prasad et al (2012) analysed the *Raitha Samparka Kendras* in Karnataka state. In this study based on primary data, 122 farmers were selected for field survey. The study identified that information delivery mechanisms and its infrastructure in the RSKs are very weak and there is

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minimum information dissemination on any aspects of agriculture and allied activities. Nearly 80 percent of the RSKs are functioning under rented buildings and farmers are also of the opinion that the RSK officials are not able to provide information related to important allied areas such as horticulture, animal husbandry and so on. The study brings in the loophole in the setup of the RSKs and the inefficiency of the institutional appointee. Roopa et al (2014) examined the performance of *Raitha Samparka Kendras* in *Doddaballapura* taluk of Karnataka. The research is based on both secondary and primary data. 144 soil samples were collected to assess the soil fertility in terms of nutrient. The study identified that the nutrient status in these soils is optimum. The information generated in this study could be used for temporal study of soil fertility to compare the fertility status in future.

RAITHA SAMPARKA KENDRA

To meet the growing demands of farming community engaged in the pursuit of latest technologies, *Raitha Mitra Yojane* was implemented in the State in 2000-01. Accordingly, 747 *Raitha Samparka Kendras* have been established one at each *hobli* (sub-blocks) levels. Each RSK is headed by an Agricultural Officer (Agricultural Graduate) duly supported by Assistant Agricultural Officers and Agricultural Assistants, whose number is decided based on the agricultural potential in terms of cropping intensity, irrigation facilities, crop diversification etc., in that region. The RSKs have been set up at *hobli* levels to provide information to farmers on crops, irrigation, cultivation practices, technologies available and market facilities.

Farmers can visit these RSKs personally and get the required information or they can contact the RSKs over phone to obtain the technical know how about crop selection, manure, marketing information, seed and soil testing facilities and crop protection problems. An 'Interaction' register is maintained in the RSK. Farmer's name, address and the purpose of visit are entered in the register. Agricultural Officer in charge of the RSK will then give suggestion or recommendations to the problems posed by the

farmers in writing in a prescribed format and the details will be entered in the interaction register. The technical staffs of the RSKs visit groups of farmers in all the villages of the *hobli* on a regular basis. Apart from scheduled visits the field visits are also undertaken to assist farmers in adoption of new technologies.

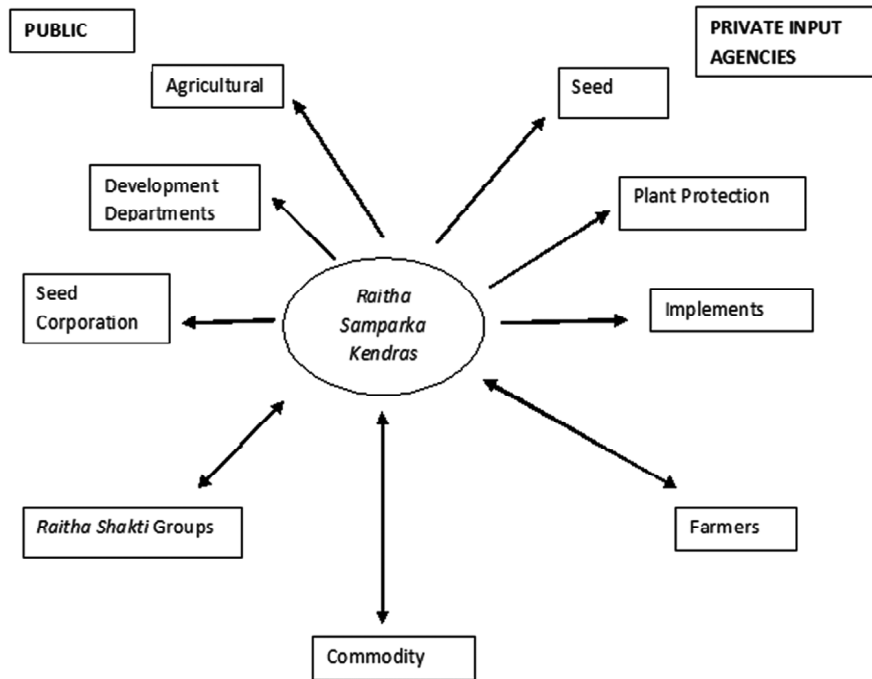
Main objective to set up *Raitha Samparka Kendras* at *hobli* level is to provide updated crop production related knowhow, arrangement of critical agricultural inputs, primary soil and seed testing facilities and arranging interface with public and private sector technologies.

The objectives of RSK;

- To provide updated information on crop production options, market practices
- To facilitate on site provision for critical inputs like seeds, bio-fertilizers, micro-nutrients
- To provide primary seed and soil testing facilities.
- To provide a forum for on-farm demonstration about new technologies developed by both public and private sector agencies.

According to the department, there are 747 *Raitha Samparka Kendras* spread across the state, one for each at Hobli or sub-block level. The kendras cater to the need of 5,628 *gram panchayats* covering 7.8 million farmers. This scheme covers entire state of the Karnataka. The scheme is funded by department of agriculture and cooperation through Government of Karnataka. RSKs provide agricultural inputs and technologies required by farmers and Rs. 28.3 crore has been allocated in the state budget during 2014-15. Out of 747 RSKs, 148 have their own buildings and budgetary allocation is utilized to purchase land and buildings to house *Kendras*.

**Networking between Public/Private Institutions and farmers
through *Raitha Samparka Kendras***



The above flow chart shows that, RSK in all its fervour will be a converging point where farmers get the best of all public and private initiatives. This is a place where farmer being at the centre can access all information from various departments, corporations and private companies. The working of RSK is subject centric and hence if worked at full potential it will be effective redressal mechanism to enhance the productivity.

User charges

The Government of Karnataka has allowed collecting user charges at the approved rates. The user charges are being collected from various public and private sector companies involved in Agricultural activities and also from the farmers as detailed in the Table 1.

Table 1: Facilities Provided and Rates Charged

Sl. No.	Facilities	Rates of Service charges (in Rs.)
1.	Seed sample testing	5.00 per sample
2.	Soil sample testing	3.00 per sample
3.	Rentals for the space to stock and sale agricultural inputs by the public sector and private sector companies	100.00 per month
4.	Rentals for the space used for demonstration purpose by the public sector and private sector companies (for a plot of 3m x 30m dimension)	300.00 per plot for a period of four months
5.	Rentals for promotional activities conducted in the premises of the RSK's by the public sector & private sector companies.	100.00 per day per event
6.	Service charges for sale of seeds and other inputs	8 percent of net value.

Source: Raithamitra.kar.nic.in

CONCLUSION

Agriculture being the main occupation in the state, government has taken several measures to improve this sector by disseminating the knowledge related to agriculture. *Raitha Samparka Kendras* have been operating in the State for a few years now. These act as the knowledge centres for the farmers that provide information on farm and market practices. However, the operation as well as swiftness of *Raitha Samparka Kendras* needs to be improved substantially. The RSK should support agricultural practices, information about these practices, information about the markets and the probable changes in the market, as well as new technologies. This can be realised if the *Kendras* are efficiently equipped, in terms of training and manpower. It is been suggested by few committees that there isn't sufficient investment from the government to give boost to this initiative.

To provide information on agriculture and allied sector information to the farmers continuously it is very necessary to establish the new centres at each *gram panchayat* level. A well trained Agricultural graduate should be in charge of each *Raitha Samparka Kendra*. This training should concentrate on giving the basic knowledge of various inter connected disciplines at the agricultural universities in the state. It is been emphasised by the Satish Chandran Committee (1993) that there is a need to start a Plant Protection Training Institute. One of the Regional Technology Development Centers (RDTC) may be converted as an institute for Plant Protection to provide training to grassroots level functionaries at RSKs by properly developing and up-grading the present facilities.

These *Kendras* should serve not only as hub of information for the farmer but also as a meeting point for consultation by the farmers. To boost the participation of farmers, *Raitha Samparka Kendras* should hold consultations with the farmers at the beginning of every season and advise accordingly about the subsequent season, as well as crops to be grown based on weather forecast and market intelligence.

The aim of RSK is to make the primary sectors more dynamic and profit oriented. The backbone of this initiative is its emphasis on farmers' participation. In all it has a 'Farmer–Centric' approach. Since the beneficiary is at the centre of this approach the onus of the dynamic working of the institutional set up depends equally on farmers also.

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